

# Outlook on Lifestyle

## Book review

### The Suspect

By B.R. CORNWELL,  
of Halton Hills Libraries  
The Suspect, by L.R. Wright.  
Unlike the English, Canadian fans of the mystery novel have no great body of authors to consult when looking for several hours of absorbing escapism. Therefore it's a real pleasure to recommend (if you have somehow missed it) the 1985 winner of the so-called "Edgar" awarded by the Mystery Writers of America. The Suspect written by a name unknown to the genre, triumphed over such well-known contenders as Ruth Rendell.

Laura Wright's previous non-genre novels have all dealt in various ways with the malaise of middle-age and the replacement of immature anxieties by mature ones. Reviews of these novels have been

"mixed", with notable exceptions, but the themes he has previously explored, re-appear in The Suspect, sharpened and made poignant by the juxtaposition of two extremities, old age and murder.

Since the reader witnesses the murder in the first page of the novel it becomes a "why-dunnit" rather than a "who-dunnit" and the thrill of the chase and discovery is replaced by the insatiable and very human desire to know how and why such a monstrous act occurred.

Unlike many murder mysteries where the corpse is merely a cooling organism on which to hang a series of clever red herrings and unlikely plot devices, both the murderer and his unlikable victim become this story's most important elements. Ms. Wright's skill lies in engaging the reader's sympathy for both peo-

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ple, and therefore making it imperative to understand why one should end up dead at the hands of the other.

It is difficult, after finishing the story, to assign the usual roles of hero, heroine, victim and villain. This ambiguity is especially marked with respect to the murderer and the man he has killed. The RCMP detective's frustration in the face of his

of evidence are compounded by his moral requirement to understand the motive.

Neither the reader's nor the detective's curiosity is resolved one moment before they ought to be.

certainly about the guilty party and his inability to lay charges for lack

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